News Releases
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador - Canada

Newfoundland Labrador

Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs
May 12, 2008

The following statement was issued by the Honourable Patty Pottle, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. It was also read in the House of Assembly today:

Aboriginal Women and Youth Continue to Inspire

I rise in this Honourable House to offer congratulations to a number of influential Aboriginal women and youth who are broadening their horizons while celebrating and preserving their Aboriginal ancestry.

During the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council annual Arts Awards Show and Gala on May 3, Mary Ann Penashue of Sheshatshiu received the Emerging Artist Award. Ms. Penashue is a true inspiration to Aboriginal women and artists throughout our province. She started drawing at a very young age, but it was not until 1995 that she started to paint. Her work embodies the Innu people, including young children and Elders of past generations.

When we see news headlines that express a positive change in any community, I think it is important we acknowledge it here in this Honourable House. This coming June will see two Innu youth graduate high school in Natuashish, the first graduating students from that community in 12 years. Shekau Piwas and Desiree Andrew will graduate from Mushuau Innu Natuashish School. These students are important role models for the younger children of Natuashish and will no doubt inspire future high school graduates.

In its current issue, Downhome magazine tells the story of two young Aboriginal women working hard to preserve their native heritage and "bettering the lives of Aboriginal people." Vanessa Webb of Nain and Julie Bull of Happy Valley-Goose Bay were recently chosen along with 12 other individuals, out of more than 150 candidates to be role models by the National Aboriginal Health Organization's National Aboriginal Role Model Program. Our Aboriginal youth are setting a positive example that is inspiring young people across Canada.

When our youth are presented with positive role models, they see in them a guide in the pursuit of personal excellence and achievement. Recently, Minister Kennedy and I had the opportunity to visit much of the north coast of Labrador and meet our partnering northern government, Nunatsiavut. While in Rigolet, I had the great pleasure to meet and speak with several youth taking part in the 15th annual Labrador Inuit Youth Symposium.

This forum provides youth an opportunity to learn about the Nunatsiavut Government with presentations from several departments. The Labrador Inuit Youth Symposium is instilling the confidence in these young people that will enable them to pursue many career opportunities.

Aboriginal people continue to contribute to the arts, the culture, and the growing economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is important to celebrate the efforts of individuals who are such an inspiration to us. I ask the Honourable Members present to join me in extending congratulations.

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